

<b>Institution:</b> The University of Manchester		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Influencing local government strategies and European policy discussion on Eastern European Roma migrants		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2013-2017		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Yaron Matras	Professor of Linguistics	1995-August 2020
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> August 2013-2019		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research led by Matras examined the situation of Roma migrants in the UK, France, Spain and Italy. The findings supported the Council of Europe and three local authorities in the north of England in their re-drafting of policy approaches to Roma migrants and the reconsideration of external intervention projects in favour of capacity building within Roma communities. The research also brought about direct benefits for Roma communities in Manchester and Oldham by creating opportunities for community participation in policymaking processes and enhancing access to employment and services.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The impact is underpinned by research carried out on the MigRom project (2013-2017; European Commission Seventh Framework Programme), which was led by Matras at The University of Manchester (UoM) in collaboration with approximately 30 colleagues in five other countries. The research consisted of a three-stage ethnographic survey among communities of Romanian Roma immigrants in Italy, France, Spain and the UK, and in the origin communities in Romania [1].</p> <p>MigRom involved semi-structured interviews, longitudinal observation, participant observation, and action-based research (an approach where the researchers participated in campaigns co-designed and shaped by community members with the aim of bringing their needs and aspirations to the attention of the public and policy makers). Approximately 700 households were surveyed through a variety of methods [2]. The subjects of inquiry were: life history and previous migration history; recent motivations to migrate; transnational family networks and mobility; interaction with public services and local social networks; religious practices; labour force integration; school experience; public engagement experience; and cultural practices and linguistic repertoires. The research included an outreach component used to gather additional data, in partnership with Manchester City Council (MCC). Another partnership with a Roma NGO based at the Council of Europe (CoE) gave access to policy drafting and implementation levels in the European context. Further research strands included local authority policy drafting and attitudes to Roma migrants in the school system [3].</p> <p>The research highlighted the economic and social experiences of Roma migrants, generating the following key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roma family structures are perceived by the majority population as the principal cultural differences between Roma and non-Roma, and have often served to legitimise external interventions and generate stigmatisation. There has been a policy tendency to refer to these family differences as the basis for preventative interventions aimed at 'safeguarding' supposedly vulnerable persons in the Roma community [1-5].</li> <li>• The research found evidence of a 'lost generation' due to exclusionary measures in the education system [4]. Drawing on long-term observation in Manchester, the research demonstrated that upward social mobility had stalled as a result of interplay between Roma-specific demographics and racialized policies, creating a 'mobility trap' for a generation of young people [4].</li> <li>• Migration was found to be a dynamic process, as extended families maintain transnational networks in several countries, including the origin locations, while at the same time aspiring to make use of all available opportunities to participate in social and institutional life in the locations of settlement. Integration, in that sense, was conditioned primarily by external</li> </ul>		

circumstances and opportunities, and curtailed by various forms of exclusion imposed on the Roma community rather than by a cultural pre-disposition to disengagement, as is often perceived [3-5].

- The research also examined Romani language and culture, relations with majority society, and efforts at political representation in historical perspective [5]. It paid attention, among other aspects of community life, to the emergence of koiné varieties of the Romani language, as social changes and mobility bring together Romani families of a variety of backgrounds who then form new communities [6].

### 3. References to the research

1. **Matras, Yaron** and Leggio, D. Viktor. eds. 2017. *Open borders, unlocked cultures. Romanian Roma migrants in Western Europe*. London: Routledge. Reviews: *Intersections East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 4.3, 199-203, 2018; *Romani Studies*, 28:2, 297-301, 2018. Available from HEI on request.
2. Cools, Pieter, Leggio, D. Viktor, **Matras, Yaron** and Oosterlynck, Stijn. 2017. 'Parity of participation' and the politics of needs interpretation: Engagement with Roma migrants in Manchester. *Journal of Social Policy* 47:2, 359-376. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279417000575>
3. **Matras, Yaron**, Leggio, D. Viktor and Steel, Mirela. 2015. 'Roma Education' as a lucrative niche: ideologies and representations. *Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* 38, 11-17. [http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Matras-et-al\\_2015.pdf](http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Matras-et-al_2015.pdf)
4. Beluschi-Fabeni, Giueseppe, Leggio, D. Viktor, and **Matras, Yaron**. 2018. A lost generation? Racialization and stalled social mobility in a group of Roma migrants in the UK. *Migration Studies* 6:1, 180-200. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mny003>
5. **Matras, Yaron**. 2015. *The Romani Gypsies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [Also published as: '*I met lucky people*'. *The story of the Romani Gypsies*. Penguin Press/Allen Lane, 2014]. Available from HEI on request.
6. **Matras, Yaron** and Leggio, D. Viktor. 2017. Variation and dialect levelling in the Romani dialect of Țândărei. *Romani Studies* 27:2, 173-209. <https://doi.org/10.3828/rs.2017.10>

### Quality indicators

The research was supported by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme under the call on 'Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union' (GA319901): 'MigRom: The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects and future engagement strategies', UoM awarded GBP776,918 (total project value EUR3,248,730) 2013-2017, PI Matras. An edited volume featuring contributions from project partners [1] was published in the prestigious Routledge series on Sociology. Other project outputs appeared in leading peer-reviewed journals and with leading academic publishers.

### 4. Details of the impact

**Context:** The MigRom project was carried out in the context of increased European policy attention towards Roma communities in the years following EU enlargement in 2007 and the extension of freedom of movement to citizens of Romania and Bulgaria. Policymakers were concerned with addressing high levels of poverty, social deprivation and marginalisation among Roma communities. Policy interest was heightened by public debates in this period concerning the presence of Roma migrants in Western European countries, often centring on issues of community cohesion. In Manchester, Matras had been working with MCC since 2009, when the Council commissioned the Romani Project (led by Matras) to carry out research in the Romani community in Manchester's Gorton South and make recommendations for a first engagement strategy (launched 2011). From 2013, MigRom built on this early research and collaboration by formalising the partnership with MCC and carrying out a substantial new programme of research and policy work.

**Pathways to Impact:** In Manchester, the project used a co-production model in which Roma communities and local policymakers helped to shape the research, assess outcomes, co-deliver a pilot engagement strategy and devise new policy approaches. In addition to its work in Manchester and other areas of northern England, the project contributed to policy debate at a

European level, engaging closely with the CoE to disseminate findings and recommendations [A, B]. The project also informed public debate via blogs, media articles and interviews, including in *The Guardian* [C].

MigRom research created demonstrable benefits for (1) Roma communities, (2) local government engagement strategies and (3) policymaking at a European level:

### **1. Roma communities in Manchester: capacity-building and enhanced self-representation**

The arrival and settlement of Romanian Roma in Manchester from around 2007 triggered expressions of hostility from the public and suspicion from many public service providers, including schools, social services, children's services, and the police. Lacking structured community representation, the Roma were unable to respond to allegations, forge constructive links with public service providers, and counteract negative images. The research opened a pathway to improve relationships between Roma and public service providers in Manchester by supporting access to key services and collecting and disseminating accurate information on Roma to service providers, as well as supporting the creation of community spokespersonship.

The project employed three outreach workers from the local Roma community and relied on the part-time contribution of an additional five Roma to support public engagement. Between September 2013 and late 2016, they ran weekly drop-in consultation sessions for Roma in which advice and support were provided on issues ranging from school registration, access to health care and other services, and access to employment, facilitating access to public services. Evaluation of the drop-in sessions was carried out for the periods (1) September 2013 to August 2014 and (2) September 2014 to April 2015. Between September 2013 and August 2014, 93 families accessed the drop-in sessions, many on a regular basis [D.i]. Between September 2014 and April 2015, meanwhile, 87 individuals accessed the sessions, 10 of whom were new clients [D.ii]. In the same period, 33 clients were informally trained to assist family members [D.ii]. Clients demonstrated increased confidence and a commitment to draw on their experience to support other community members [D.ii]. Reflecting on the project, one of the outreach workers commented: *"I have seen changes within the community, brought about through work by the MigRom Project. The Project has helped find jobs, courses and education opportunities. The main focus of the Project is to build self-reliance within the community, building skills for people to apply and gain jobs for themselves. This has proved successful as many in the community are now employed"* [E].

One of the key project deliverables was the establishment of a regular consultation forum to create a link between the Roma community in Manchester and MCC. In 2015, the community group *Roma Voices of Manchester CIC (RVoM)* was set up to deliver this aspect of the project. The project's outreach workers and additional Roma community members were the founders and directors. The involvement of a group of young Roma in the project's research and outreach work developed leadership capacity within the community [F]. MCC reported in 2016 that RVoM had been *"instrumental in improving the representation of Roma people in the Council's 2016 Communities of Interest report [...] raising awareness of some of the highest priorities for Roma people in Manchester from their own perspective"* [F; see also G, p. 84]. RVoM continued to provide advice to the Roma community in Manchester for approximately one year after the conclusion of the MigRom project in 2017, particularly concerning issues of citizenship and settled status in relation to Brexit. At the end of this period, the group's activities were gradually scaled back, as a key objective of developing capacity and skills within the Roma community had been met.

The project's work with schools was another important strand of community engagement. The project engaged intensively with two local schools, Cedar Mount Academy and Gorton Mount Primary, which each had up to 20% Roma pupils, through classroom observations and the delivery of Romani language-based activity sessions for pupils [H]. Teachers attended the activity sessions and the project team held regular meetings with school leadership teams to provide immediate feedback on the classroom observations. Together, these activities raised awareness of Roma culture and strengthened teachers' aspirations for Roma pupils. At Cedar Mount Academy this

engagement led to the discontinuation of a practice of segregating Roma pupils. The project also engaged with approximately 15 additional schools through pupil visits to UoM and training delivered to school staff on Romani history, language, and cultural particularities. These additional schools included Abraham Moss Community School, Levenshulme High School and Chapel Street, Heald Place and Divine Mercy primary schools. The project drew interest from schools beyond Manchester, leading to events with Coventry Secondary School, Essa Academy Bolton, and Oasis Academy Fir Vale in Sheffield.

Media engagement helped to give Roma migrants a public voice and brought to public attention alternative models of local engagement with Roma that counter hostility and forge constructive partnerships [C]. For example, Matras's article in *The Guardian*, 'A Roma reality check' [C.ii], received 467 comments. A public event at UoM in February 2014 with Lord Blunkett, then MP, ('Roma migration: a challenge or an opportunity for our cities?') drew an audience of over 250 participants and received wide social media coverage.

## **2. Shaping local government engagement strategies in Manchester, Oldham and Bradford**

In Manchester, the research enhanced local authority officers' understanding of Romani history and culture, migration background and aspirations and needs. It helped to create links between council officers and Roma communities and shaped some of the general engagement strategies such as regular outreach programmes targeting Roma. Reporting on the outcomes of the project in Manchester in 2016, the MCC Equality Team stated that "*[t]he opportunity to learn from the academic research component of the project has helped to build the Council's awareness and understanding of a community in the city that it previously did not have extensive experience of working with*" [F]. The same report details the ways in which MigRom supported the achievement of MCC Equality Objectives for the 2016-20 period in a number of key areas. For example, the report states that new project data concerning Roma pupils in Manchester schools, published in [3] and [4], had increased MCC awareness of key issues affecting educational experience and attainment [F]. The project's policy briefings (collated on the project website [C.iii]) had challenged cultural and social misconceptions about Roma people and had become useful tools for MCC officers when working with communities and developing service specifications [F]. New case studies and supplementary texts provided by the project researchers and RVoM had "*[s]upported the accuracy and integrity of the Council's reporting of Roma issues*" [F].

In 2015 MigRom established a partnership with Oldham Council (OC). At this time Oldham's Roma communities were growing and the Council sought engagement with the project to support its work with communities [I]. Drawing on the model developed in Manchester, the MigRom team delivered training to OC officers and partner organisations and ran drop-in sessions for Roma communities in Oldham between 2015 and 2017. The Head of Communities and Early Intervention at OC reported in 2017 that the partnership had supported the Council's work in a variety of ways: "*The partnership [...] was invaluable in building the Council's capacity to engage effectively with Roma people in Oldham, through improving understanding, facilitating dialogue and helping to develop relationships. It provided the foundations for the longer term engagement strategy with Roma people, including the decision not to have a separate Roma engagement strategy but to integrate it within a wider approach to emerging communities within Oldham*" [I]. This approach, also adopted by MCC, implemented the recommendations arising from the research analysis [2], which found that Roma preferred not to see issues pertaining to their culture discussed publicly as policy issues and sought instead to re-privatise them, meaning that the pathway to equal participation meant the avoidance of singling out Roma as having a pre-disposition to disengage with particular services. Following the project, OC created a dedicated position for a Roma outreach worker and set up permanent communication channels to support local schools with a high population of Roma, as well as collecting up-to-date data on the local Roma population (which had previously only been listed by 'nationality', i.e. by country of origin).

In Bradford, the project team contributed to a series of learning events involving Council officers and strategic directors from the NHS and police, with the aim of challenging stereotypes and putting forward principles for an engagement strategy drawing on the research team's work in

Manchester. Approximately 200 people attended these events in early 2016 [text removed for publication].

### 3. Informing European Roma-related policymaking

The project had direct access to policy discussions regarding Roma migrants through its partnership with the *European Roma and Travellers Forum* (ERTF), an umbrella organisation of Roma NGOs with consultative status at the CoE. The research findings on the perception of Roma family structures and the contribution of remittances to the economic development of sender communities informed a number of representations made by the ERTF to CoE member states. Matras contributed to discussions of CoE's *Ad Hoc Expert Committee on Roma* (CAHROM) between 2014 and 2015 and published a series of blogs and articles on the CoE's initiative to create a European Roma Institute (ERI) [A]. These contributions questioned the proposed remit of the ERI, which included the licensing of research and teaching on Roma, on the grounds that this would threaten academic freedom in Romani studies. Matras's contributions helped to shape the remit of the ERI, as a decision was taken to separate cultural production from academic research [A]. Matras was a member of the Steering Group of the joint CoE and European Commission *European Academic Network on Romani Studies* (EANRS) between 2012 and 2016. EANRS was established to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between academic researchers and policymakers, with the overall aim of supporting efforts to promote the social inclusion of Romani citizens in Europe. In 2016, Matras contributed to an EANRS open letter that criticised CoE public communications around issues of vulnerability of members of the Roma community to trafficking and forced marriage [B.i]. [text removed for publication]

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Contributions to debate about the European Roma Institute:
- <https://theconversation.com/eu-initiative-risks-turning-roma-into-entertainers-not-real-people-with-human-rights-40100> (15 April 2015)
  - <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/04/16/why-plans-for-a-european-roma-institute-might-be-a-setback-for-europes-roma/> (16 April 2015).
- B. (i) Blog post documenting open letter to the Council of Europe Secretary General [romanistudies.eu/do-roma-need-protection-from-themselves/](http://romanistudies.eu/do-roma-need-protection-from-themselves/) (21 March 2016); (ii) [text removed for publication].
- C. Media coverage included: (i) Channel 4 News, 'Roma communities living in the UK' (27 November 2013) <http://www.channel4.com/news/uk-immigrations-migrants-roma-eu>; (ii) Yaron Matras, 'A Roma reality check', *The Guardian* (12 February 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/12/roma-reality-check>. See also (iii) press, reports and policy briefings at: <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/report-policy-briefs/>.
- D. Reports on drop-in sessions, documenting reach and outcomes: (i) September 2013-August 2014 and (ii) September 2014-April 2015, available at: <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/report-policy-briefs/>
- E. Comments from project outreach worker at: <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/romaparticipation/>
- F. Manchester City Council, *Report on the MigRom Project Engagement Strategy and its Alignment to Manchester City Priorities* (4 October 2016).
- G. Manchester City Council, *Communities of Interest Report 2016*, describing the work of Roma Voices of Manchester (p. 84).
- H. MigRom project report: 'Roma pupils at Bright Futures Education Trust' (2014). Available at: <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/report-policy-briefs/>.
- I. Testimonial from Head of Communities and Early Intervention, Oldham Council (10 April 2017), corroborating impacts on Oldham Council.
- J. [text removed for publication]